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ART NEEDLEWORK

THE ART OF EMBROIDERY.

XII.

ANOTHER favorite variety of the gold cord embroidery described in the previous chapter is shown in Fig. 43. After the pattern is marked out and the cord stitched down, the gold thread is sewn down from side to side, covering the cord, and being turned at the line marking the width of the border, on both sides. The upright portions of the cord can be covered by two or three threads of gold, according to the size of it; but it will be necessary to stitch these across, so as to keep them in their places. This may be done with Maltese silk, so as to show as little as possible, and the edges of the cord marked out with thick red silk stitchings. Fig. 44 shows another varied gold bordering, which must be treated exactly in the same way, by preparing the pattern

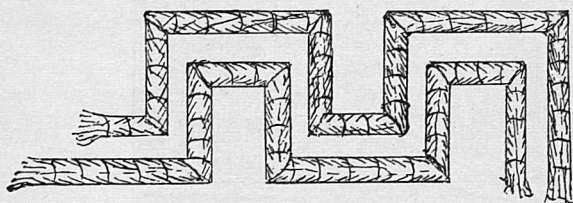


FIG. 43. CORD READY FOR GOLD.

first in cord and afterward covering it with gold laid down in straight lines and run from side to side, the stitchings following and marking out the edges of the cord. Figs. 43 and 45 show the pattern marked in the cord only, ready for covering with gold. In Fig. 44 the gold thread has been stitched over a portion of the cord pattern. The gold may be laid in either direction for these patterns, either from end to end or side to side of the cord design. It is obvious that almost any geomet-

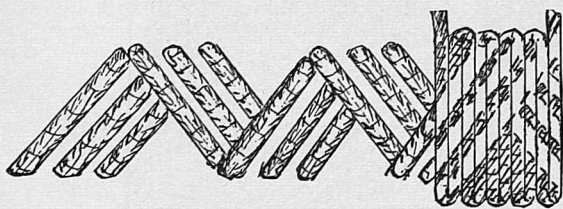


FIG. 44. CORD PARTLY STITCHED DOWN.

rical or conventional design may be worked out in this way, the key or wave pattern being very effective as well as interlacing circles or ovals. Very intricate patterns are sometimes found in pieces of old needlework, chiefly ecclesiastical, worked out in these raised gold cordings. It would be impossible to give illustrations of all these, and therefore those have been selected which can be most readily described and learnt from drawings; when these are mastered there will be no difficulty in inventing or copying others. Some of the ancient pieces of embroid-

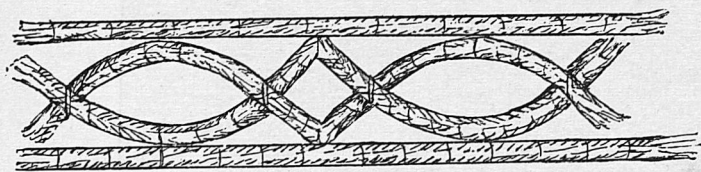


FIG. 45. CORD READY FOR GOLD.

ery are treasures of stitches, or rather patterns, for, properly speaking, the stitch is the same in all.

Parchment was also much used as a foundation for covering with gold in old times, and very beautiful designs may be cut out in it and covered in the same way as the cord, only that it is, of course, much flatter, although raised enough to give richness to the work. Fig. 46 shows a copy of an old border for parchment.

This may be worked with double lines of gold thread at the edge, and the curved lines between the borders may also be laid down with thick gold, the leaf alone being covered with finer gold stitched over. In sewing gold thread over parchment designs the gold must be carried quite across the model and stitched down only at the edges. Fig. 46 is really intended to be worked with "passing," which, as already explained, can be carried through the material. In this case, the passing must be treated as satin stitch. It should, however, be brought backward and forward on the surface only, so as not to waste the gold by putting it on the back.

A very inartistic imitation of this old parchment work was in fashion a few years ago, and still exists, done over card patterns with thick twist or purse silk—inartistic, because the patterns were to be bought stamped out, and, as ordinarily happens, where cheapness is the great thing aimed at, they were generally bad in form. It is a good plan, however, to practice this kind of work with silk instead of gold thread, as it is by no means easy at first to keep the covering of the card quite even and regular, and unless it is so it will never look well. Card is not as pleasant a foundation as parchment, being so much stiffer.

What is technically known as "plate," much used in ancient ecclesiastical work, though not very common now, consists of narrow strips of gold and silver, like flattened wire. It is laid down frequently as a border. Sometimes it is placed so as to form a pattern, and is then stitched down and kept in its place by colored silk, which is passed over the "plate" from side to side in different positions, so as to form a pattern. Fig. 47 shows several varieties of these stitchings over straight lines of plate. It is unnecessary to show patterns produced by turning the plate about, as it is evident that any of those already illustrated for card can be made use of for this very much simpler style of decorative work.

Spangles of all shapes and sizes were anciently much used in ecclesiastical work, but they have fallen into disfavor in modern times, being imitated in common metal and used for all kinds of cheap and tawdry decoration. Formerly they were made only of the purest metal, and they are found on old pieces of work still untarnished. The use of spangles, however, can never be very artistic. They produce a certain amount of glitter and show with a very small expenditure of labor; they have always a somewhat meretricious effect, and in any case scarcely deserve to be classed with decorative needlework, although it is impossible to pass them over altogether when treat-

ing of gold embroidery.

"Purl," generally designated in these days as "bullion," is too well known to need description. It is made of very fine gold or silver wire twisted round into a series of continuous rings. It is used occasionally in ecclesiastical work where a raised and very rich effect is required. The bullion is cut off in even lengths with a sharp pair of scissors, counting the number of rings,

and is then taken up on the needle, and sewn down exactly as beads are treated. Sometimes long lengths of bullion are laid side by side, flat or over stuffing, or it may be carried round a curved line. Bullion is best known at the present time in military embroidery. Little art is required in its use, and the merest child can learn to apply it in the regular trade embroidery, such as is

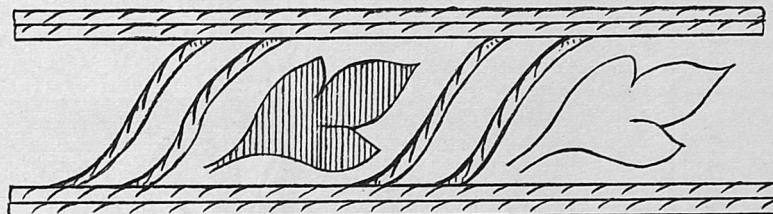


FIG. 46. PATTERN FOR PARCHMENT WORK.

used on the uniforms and caps of military men. In raised Spanish embroidery, which may be taken as a pattern, as being the richest, both in ancient and modern work, bullion is frequently used, in combination with basket-stitch for instance. Small designs or circles may be introduced wholly formed of bullion. Another variation frequently used is what may, for the sake of convenience, be described as stuffed satin stitch, worked with plate.

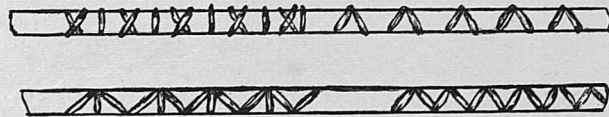


FIG. 47. VARIOUS STITCHINGS OVER "PLATE."

The plate may either be sewn through the material, as is generally the case in the old specimens of work, or it may be laid over the cord or stuffing and sewn down firmly on each side. In old specimens straight lines of thick and rather soft cotton stuffing have generally been laid down, usually as a border or edge to some other kind of gold pattern, and the gold or silver plate is sewn over this from side to side, with a long-eyed needle, to

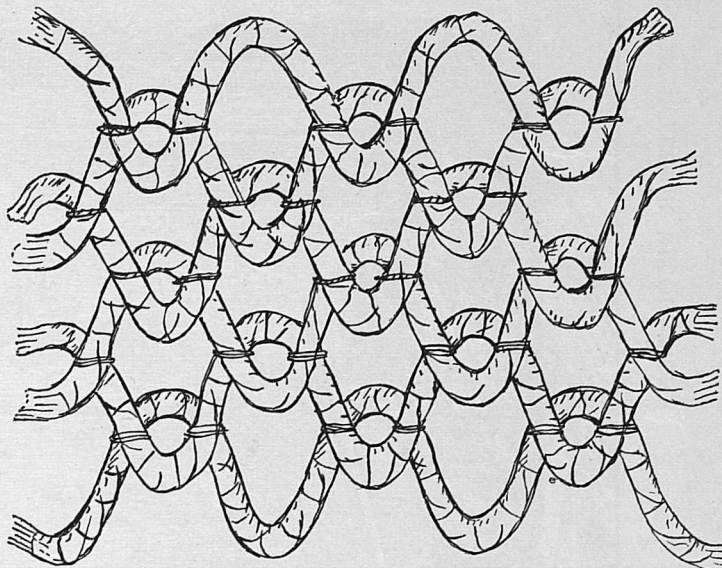


FIG. 48. CORD READY FOR GOLD.

prevent its being creased, just as one would sew over with silk. Often the plate is sewn over masses of stuffing, to give the greater effect of a large piece of gold work. Treated in this manner it is not very pleasing, but it has the advantage—a serious one, where silver plate is used—that it can be rubbed up with a dry wash-leather when tarnished, without injuring the work in the slightest degree.

L. HIGGIN.